

Heartleaf Bittercress

Cardamine cordifolia



Heartleaf Bittercress is a member of the mustard family whose flowers usually have 4 petals, distinguishing them from many other families of flowering plants. The common name reflects the wavy heart shape of the leaves and their bitter taste due to the presence of mustard oils. The plant spreads from underground stems and often forms large patches in wet habitats along streams or in seeps.

This species occurs in the west from the Canadian province of British Columbia south to New Mexico at moderate to high elevations in aspen and spruce-fir forests and to beyond timberline.

At Cedar Breaks this species forms large stands along the Alpine Pond Trail beneath the canopy of the many dead spruce trees. While many visitors lament the presence of so many dead trees, Heartleaf Bittercress and other understory species benefit from the additional light through more growth and flowering.